

OAKLAND MILLS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC. ELECTION GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

Village Elections are officially guided by Article VIII, Section 8 of the By-laws. In addition, tradition, experience, and press deadlines contribute to the effective administration of an annual election. These rules and regulations draw from the By-Laws and past elections to serve as guidelines for the Village Board, the staff, and the Election Monitor Committee before, during, and after the village elections. The procedures are described according to the timeline of the election activities.

The Board of Directors of the Oakland Mills Community Association (OMCA) affirms their great appreciation for and confidence in the Oakland Mills Election Monitoring Committee (EMC). The OMCA Board confirms that Oakland Mills continues to adhere rigorously to fair election standards and established guidelines. These guidelines are finalized by the EMC and approved by the OMCA Board prior to each year's OMCA election day. After finalization, the guidelines for that election day cannot be altered or amended.

At its discretion and based on village, county, state, or federal circumstances, the Oakland Mills Board of Directors may decide that village elections will be held remotely (partially or fully). This would include the authority to provide for online voting and mail-in ballots, cancel on-site voting and on-site ballot counting, and cancel on-site election events.

All questions regarding the elections should be directed to the Election Monitor Committee Chair(s).

GOALS

The following major goals have been identified in administering village elections:

1. The election should be fair and be perceived as fair by the establishment of clear procedures.
2. The election procedures should encourage potential candidates to run in the election and encourage people to vote.
3. Elections should be efficient and run at a reasonable cost.

Non-Contested Election

In 2016 the Members of the Association passed a by-law amendment stating that if the number of candidates for the Board of Directors was equal to or less than the number of open seats, those candidates who submitted a valid candidate application and met other criteria required for holding a seat on the Board of Directors would be deemed elected with the one-year term of office beginning May 1. The members also passed a by-law amendment stating that if the number of candidates for the Columbia Council Representative seat was equal to or less than one candidate, that candidate who submitted a valid candidate application and met other criteria required for holding the Oakland Mills seat on the Columbia Council would be deemed elected, with the one-year term of office beginning May 1.

If both races are non-contested, there will be no election held. An election will be held if either or both races are contested.

"ELECTION ADMINISTRATIVE RULES AND REGULATIONS"

I. BEFORE ELECTION

A. Selection of Election Monitor Committee and Chair

1. Appointment by Village Board
 - a. The Village Board is responsible for appointing the Election Monitor Committee by Jan. 31. The Committee will number at least 5 people.
 - b. The Chair(s) of the Election Monitor Committee is appointed by the Village Board.
2. Duties and responsibilities of Election Chair(s) and Committee
 - a. The chair(s) must be completely familiar with the rules and regulations of the election. The chair works very closely with the Village Manager to ensure that the By-Law requirements are met and that all duties are performed. However, it is the chair's ultimate responsibility to the Oakland Mills Village Board that the election conforms to the By-Laws and that all deadlines as required by the By-Laws are met.
 - b. The chair(s) or chair's designee is responsible for explaining the rules and procedures of the election to all candidates. Candidate packets are prepared by village staff and made available to candidates.
 - c. The committee coordinates Candidates' Night/Candidates' Forum, and the chair or chair's designee(s) traditionally serves as moderator.
 - d. The committee is responsible for training poll workers. It is particularly important that all poll workers clearly understand how to determine voting eligibility, how to read the voters lists, and how to handle special problems.
 - e. The Village Manager, chair(s), or chair's designee prepares all material needed for counting ballots. The chair(s) or chair's designee is responsible for validating or not validating all "irregular" ballots received.
 - f. The chair(s) or chair's designee acts as spokesperson for the Committee and, after the election, is responsible for compiling final election results, handling challenges to the election, and submitting an election report to the Village Board.
3. Personal qualities of Election Chair(s)
 - a. With the duties and responsibilities of this position also comes the need to handle pressure and, sometimes, confrontations with people who have personal investments in the election results. The chair's style of dealing fairly and authoritatively with candidates and volunteers is critical for a fair election.
 - b. It is preferable that the chair(s) have previously worked on the Election Monitor Committee.

B. Schedule for Election

1. Setting Election Day

The Village Manager is responsible for setting the date of the election with other Village Managers so that elections are held simultaneously throughout Columbia. Election Day will be Saturday April 26, 2025.
2. Setting election schedule
 - a. The Village Manager prepares an election timetable based on the By-Law requirements after the Election Day is established. Important dates are outlined below:
 - April: required month for village elections
 - By Jan 31: appointment of Election Monitor Committee and the election chair

- 45 or more days prior to election: begin accepting candidate applications
 - 45 or more days prior to election: eligibility date for members in good standing
 - 30 or more days prior to election: finish accepting candidate applications; deadline date for candidates' statements established by EMC
 - Within 10 days of the deadline for receipt of candidate statements, publish candidate statements online and post at The Other Barn.
 - All Online voting will end at noon on *Friday, April 25, 2025*.
 - All mail-in ballots must be postmarked on or before *April 23, 2025* and received by *April 28, 2025*.
 - 5 days after posting of election results: deadline for written challenges to elections
 - Within 5 days of receiving a challenge: Election Monitor Committee will meet
 - 5 days after election or until disposition of any challenge: chair will hold ballots
 - By *May 13, 2025* results: certify election
- b. The Village Manager will consider the need for transition time between the election of Village Boards and their taking office on May 1 to allow time for challenges to take place and for the election results to be accepted by the Board.

C. Candidate Application – In 2021 Members of the Association approved a by-law amendment to **Sections 8.02 and 8.03 of the Oakland Mills Community Association By-Laws**. The By-Law amendment eliminates the requirement for submitting a nomination petition and adds the requirement to submit a candidate application. The candidate can submit only one application, either for the Oakland Mills Board of Directors or for the Columbia Council Representative.

Members of the Association – OMCA Articles of Incorporation, Article EIGHTH (approved by the members of the Association on July 28, 2017):

The Affairs of the corporation shall be managed by at least (5) directors, all of whom shall be members of the Association as of the date of their election and through their entire term. If a director ceases to be a member before that director's term expires, that director's seat shall be considered vacant and the remaining members of the Board of Directors may fill that position pursuant to the procedures provided herein and in the By-Laws.

OMCA By-Law Change, Section 2.03 (approved by members of the Association on April 29, 2017):

Section 2.03 – Change the title to: Election and Removal of Directors

Section 2.03 – Add the following sentence to the end of the paragraph:

If a director is no longer a member of the Association before the expiration of that director's term, the Board of Directors may remove that director from office and appoint a successor.

1. Preparation

Each candidate application shall show the full name and address of the candidate, their signature, and the office they are seeking. A candidate whose name is on a lease must submit a copy of the lease along with their candidate application. This will be kept in confidence and only used to validate the

candidate's address.

2. Validation

A member of the Election Monitor Committee will declare the candidate's application valid when the requirements of section Preparation 1 are met.

The following resolution was passed by the Oakland Mills Board on February 28, 2017 and effective immediately:

To ensure that Oakland Mills residency can be established for candidates for the Oakland Mills Board of Directors and the Oakland Mills Representative to the Columbia Council, the Oakland Mills Election Monitoring Committee will adopt the following criteria to establish the residency of candidates, effective as of the 2017 election cycle:

- The election committee will perform a State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) online search to confirm candidates claiming property ownership in Oakland Mills.
- If the election committee is unable to confirm ownership, or if the candidate leases property in Oakland Mills:
 - Candidates will present to a member of the committee a valid and current government-issued identification including a driver's license, state identification card, passport, or other state or federal government issued identification displaying the candidate's name, photograph, and home address.
 - Candidates will present to a member of the committee a signed original, current lease or deed with candidate's address, valid dates, and signature(s).
 - Candidates will present to a member of the committee a current (issued within one month of the election filing date) utility bill for services at a fixed address that includes candidate's name and address (e.g., landline telephone, gas, electric, water, cable bill)
 - Address on each of the three documents presented should match to establish residency at that address.

The election committee will develop a process and check sheet to ensure each candidate meets these criteria and will return rather than retain the documentation to the candidate for protection of privacy after two election committee members review the documentation. The election committee will determine whether the candidate for the Columbia Council has Oakland Mills residency and whether the candidates for the Oakland Mills Community Association Board of Directors have Oakland Mills residency, per the OMCA by-laws, and report to the Village Manager and sitting Board of Directors prior to finalization and printing of election ballots.

D. Election Information Packets – Election Information Packets can be viewed and downloaded from the Oakland Mills [website](#) or available at The Other Barn. Email manager@oaklandmills.org to obtain a hard copy of the packet.

1. Preparation and distribution of packets
 - a. The Village Manager and Village Staff are responsible for the preparation of election information packets for candidates.
2. Contents of information packets

- a. The information packets shall include, for Columbia Council Representative:
 - 1) CA Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws
 - 2) Calendar of Important Columbia Association Board of Director meetings/events
 - 3) All of the following:
- b. For Village Board:
 - 1) Village Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws
 - 2) Election Guidelines and Regulations
 - 3) Calendar for election
 - 4) Recent copies of the e-newsletter.
 - 5) Other information about the village as prepared by the Village Manager.
 - 6) Association Approved Budget
 - 7) Candidate Application
- c. The Village Board appoints the members of the Architectural Committee. It has been the practice in Oakland Mills that the Village Board appoints itself as the Architectural Committee. Information regarding Board Member architectural covenant compliance shall be included in the election packet.

E. Candidates' Statements

- 1. Length - Candidates' official statements must be 150 words or less. All words in excess of 150 will be deleted from the statement. ~~Candidates will also be asked to supply a shorter 100-word statement (all words in excess of 100 will be deleted from the short statement) for use when space will not allow printing the official statements.~~ Statements will be published exactly as submitted by the candidate.
- 2. Publication
 - a. Complete statements are published on the oaklandmills.org website and in The Other Barn lobby 10 days after the date for candidate statements to be submitted.
 - b. The statements shall be posted on the Oakland Mills website, in the lobby of The Other Barn, and on the front door of The Other Barn.

F. Financial Contribution Disclosure Statement

Candidates for the Oakland Mills Board of Directors and The Oakland Mills Columbia Council Representative will be asked to voluntarily provide "Candidate Financial Contribution Disclosure Statements" for the 2024 Oakland Mills Community Association Election.

Candidates will list the name of the contributor and the amount of contribution received. The disclosure statements are not required this year, but all candidates are encouraged to submit such statements.

Two simple forms are included in the Candidate Packet, and candidates will be asked, not required, to submit the first form on March 7, 2025 and the second form on April 11, 2025. The reports, as submitted, will be posted on the Oakland Mills website (oaklandmills.org) through the conclusion of the election.

G. Volunteers for Election Day

- 1. Recruiting
 - a. The Village Manager is responsible for recruiting workers to staff the polls on

- election day.
 - b. The Election Monitor Committee chair or a member from the committee is responsible for the supervision of poll workers on election days and for answering their questions during election hours.
2. Training
- a. Each poll worker must be specifically trained.
 - b. Poll workers should be asked to arrive at least 10 minutes before their shifts begin to review and observe procedures.

H. List of Eligible Voters

1. Acquiring voters list
- a. The Village Manager is responsible for securing a list of eligible voters according to the Village By-Laws.
 - b. The list of property owners shall be obtained from the CA assessment office.
 - c. The list of apartment tenants shall be a list of apartment dwelling units, not residents of the units, for each apartment complex.
2. Format of list
- a. Two lists of property owners should be available at the polls, one printed out in alphabetical order by owner, one by address. Both are important to validate all possible ballots.
 - b. A current list of apartment dwelling units must be available.

I. Online Voting – On November 9, 2021 the Oakland Mills Board of Directors approved the option to **allow online voting** for Oakland Mills village elections. Voter eligibility remains the same, and a voter can choose to vote in advance **EITHER** online or by mail-in ballot, OR vote in person on election day.

Only one form of voting will be accepted: either online, mail-in, or in person. If multiple ballots are received from the same address, NO ballots from that address will be counted.

Oakland Mills will use an outside company to tabulate online voting. All votes are anonymous, whether cast online, mail-in, or in-person. The OMCA election chair(s) will receive from the company that handles online voting a list that shows the address of the property that voted. At the conclusion of online voting, OMCA will also receive a spreadsheet that lists all votes cast. OMCA will not receive any information that identifies how a particular property voted, as the voting spreadsheet will be anonymized. No one from the company handling Oakland Mills elections will be a member of or affiliated with the Oakland Mills Community Association in any way beyond the provision of online voting services.

J. Regular and Mail-in Ballots

1. Preparation
- a. The Village manager and village staff are responsible for the preparation of all ballots.
 - b. The order of candidate names on the ballot is determined by lottery at the time that the candidate applications are verified. Names are “drawn” by an election committee member with either another member or OMCA staff member present, in person or electronically, to verify order drawn. Names

will be listed on the ballot according to the order that they were drawn.

2. Mail-in ballots: mail-in ballots are available as provided by the By-Laws.
 - a. **Each ballot will contain an online voting pin specific to the property address.** The code should be used to vote online and can only be used one time. Once the online vote is cast, it cannot be deleted or changed. **If a property casts an online vote and also sends a mail-in ballot and/or votes in-person, no vote will be counted.**
 - b. The ballot will be enclosed in the election mailing and can be used as a mail-in ballot if the voter chooses to vote by mail-in ballot.
 - c. If choosing to vote by mail-in ballot, the ballot should be submitted by mail in the return envelope provided by the village. The Election Committee shall accept mail-in ballots postmarked on or before *April 23 2025 and received by April 28, 2025.*
 - d. The return envelope flap of the mail-in ballot shall have space for the sender's Oakland Mills address and a check box indicating that the sender is an owner or lessee. By checking the box, the sender shall attest to the fact that they are a valid property owner or valid lease holder at the address listed on the return envelope flap.
 - e. Oakland Mills has a joint Business Reply Mail account with other Columbia villages. All mail-in ballots are sent to the Wilde Lake Community Association and held securely by the Wilde Lake Village Manager. The Oakland Mills Election Monitor Committee Chair(s) are authorized to obtain Oakland Mills sealed ballots from Wilde Lake and keep the ballots in their possession for validation and counting.
3. Procedures for validating ballots
 - a. Ballots will be validated by the Election Monitor Committee.
 - b. Under the authority of the Election Monitor Committee Chair(s), mail-in ballots will be validated only on election day. On election day or during the five days thereafter, all ballots shall be validated and counted.
 - c. All mail-in ballots postmarked by *April 23, 2025* will be accepted if received by *April 28, 2025.*
 - d. Should a resident not receive a newsletter/ballot in the mail, he/she may come to The Other Barn to pick one up. The resident may complete the ballot, insert it into provided envelope, seal the envelope, complete the address and signature portion on the outside of the sealed envelope containing the ballot, and drop the sealed envelope with the ballot in the locked blue ballot box. The ballots that have been dropped into the blue ballot box will be kept in the locked box until *April 26, 2025*, election day. Upon completion of all voting at 5 pm on election day, these ballots will be removed and validated by the EMC and counted.

Please note, residents may only vote online with the ballot/pin number they received in the mail.

K. Campaigning - Candidates' volunteers who serve in any capacity for Oakland Mills Community Association as elected members or as volunteers (with the exception of the members of the Election Monitor Committee) can actively campaign for or against candidates. **This must be done separately from their volunteer roles for the Association.**

Campaign Signs and Campaigning: The Oakland Mills Election Monitor Committee will follow the Howard County Sign Code as it pertains to sign codes and the Oakland Mills Architectural Guidelines.

- Here is a link to the Howard County Sign Code:
- https://library.municode.com/md/howard_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=HOCOCO_TIT3BU_SUBTITLE_5SI
- Here is link to the Oakland Mills Architectural Guidelines:
https://oaklandmills.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Guidelines_04-25-17-revision_Final-Approved-Version-FINAL-TO-USE-FOR-WEBSITE.pdf

Additionally, no campaign signs are permitted on Columbia Association property. CA properties in the Oakland Mills village center area are the Ice Rink, The Teen Center, The Other Barn, sidewalk/courtyard in front of and around all facilities, and the parking lot behind Dunkin' where the police office is located. Additionally, it is recommended that candidates contact Klein Enterprises (owners of the Oakland Mills Village Center) for permission to campaign in the village center. Candidates can contact Klein Enterprises property manager. Contact the village manager for Klein's property manager contact information.

Individual store owners should be contacted for any type of campaigning within the stores.

The Oakland Mills Board of Directors has no role in the manner in which candidates choose to campaign.

II. DURING THE ELECTION

***Please note that if a decision is made to cancel or alter on-site voting, some of the provisions below will not be applicable and all ballots will be cast online, received by mail, or placed in the secure box affixed the front exterior wall of The Other Barn.**

A. Voting Time and Place

1. Location
Voting takes place at The Other Barn, 5851 Robert Oliver Place, Columbia, and possible other locations at the discretion of the EMC.
2. Hours for polls to be open:
In order to encourage voter turnout, polls *may* be open Friday hours as well as Saturday hours. **Voting in 2024 will take place at The Other Barn on Saturday, April 26, 2025 only from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**
3. Visibility and location of polling sites
 - a. Voting tables should be in a clear, obvious place, not obstructed by other special events or displays.
 - b. People setting up poll sites should be aware of the electioneering boundaries.

B. Who Can Vote

1. Owners of property in Oakland Mills and tenants with a lease on property in Oakland

Mills

- a. If a property is jointly owned, the voting right is jointly held, so only one vote may be cast.
 - b. If a "fee simple" lot, condominium or cooperative unit is leased to a tenant, the tenant is also entitled to cast one vote per unit.
2. Eligibility and identification
- a. A member who has resided in Oakland Mills at least 45 days prior to the election is eligible to vote. The actual date is set by the Election Monitor Committee.
 - b. For on-site voting only: A member will be considered eligible to vote if they can present identification showing that they rent and/or own at an address subject to Columbia Association assessment within Oakland Mills Village. On-site voters who do not have identification with them will be asked to sign a form providing their name and address and attest to the fact that they are an Oakland Mills property owner or valid leaseholder.
 - c. For mail-in voting only: The mail-in ballot envelope flap shall have space to attest to voter eligibility.
 - d. The election mailer shall include voter eligibility and identification requirements.

C. Voters Lists and Procedures for Validating Ballots at the Polls

Online voting will close at NOON on *April 25, 2025*. Prior to the opening of polls on *April 26, 2025* at 8:30 a.m., the Election Committee will receive from the company a list of all properties that voted online. **Only one form of voting will be accepted. If a property submits multiple ballots, whether online, by mail, or in person, NO ballots will be counted for that property.**

1. Voters lists
 - a. There should be at least two poll workers and poll workers will determine the best method to efficiently verify voter information utilizing voter lists and apartment dwelling lists.
2. Validation of property owners
 - a. After showing suitable ID, property owners whose names are on the voters list will be checked off by the poll worker. A ballot will then be issued to them. (See 2b above for those who do not have ID.)
 - b. After showing suitable identification, property owners **whose names are not on the voter lists** will place their ballots in a cover envelope with their name and address on the outside, and the ballot, in the envelope, will be placed in the ballot box.
 - c. After showing suitable ID, an apartment tenant will be checked off the apartment unit at the appropriate address. Apartment tenants will also be asked if they have lived at the address for at least 45 days. (See 2b above for those who do not have ID.)

D. Electioneering

1. Electioneering boundaries
 - a. There shall be no electioneering within the area established annually by the Election Monitor Committee. Boundaries established for 2024 are:
 - **No electioneering may take place** inside The Other Barn or inside the courtyard or on the sidewalk area directly in front of, on the side, or behind The Other Barn (except as outlined below) or the parking lot on the side of The Other Barn or the parking lot in the rear of The Other Barn.

- **Electioneering may take place** in front of and behind the CA Youth & Teen Center and on the sidewalk in front of the Courtyard up to the end of the Courtyard fence where the sidewalk leads to the handicap door of The Other Barn and the same area behind the Courtyard. **Electioneering may also take place** to the left of The Other Barn (when looking at the building from the street) on the section of the sidewalk abutting Robert Oliver Place and in front of the grass area.
- Candidates may not stand under the canopy in front of The Other Barn entrance doors.
- Candidates and their supporters must adhere to all electioneering boundaries.
- No electioneering means that no canvassing, electioneering, campaigning, or posting of any campaign material is permitted within the zone. "Posting of any campaign material" includes wearing any article of clothing, hat, sticker, or button that indicates support of or opposition to any candidate, question, or political party.

However, electioneering does not apply to a voter going to vote in his or her polling place. A person on his or her way to vote may wear campaign paraphernalia or carry, but not distribute, campaign literature. He/she must leave the voting zone promptly after voting.

- b. Poll workers should take care to remove any electioneering hand-outs from the voting tables and from anywhere else in The Other Barn

2. Violations

- a. The Election Monitor Committee chair(s) or their designee is responsible for warning candidates and their representatives if they electioneer within the electioneering boundary.
- b. If a serious problem results, the Election Monitor Committee should document the violations in writing and may recommend that the Village Board invalidate the election.

III. AFTER THE ELECTION

Election results shall be provided to the community on or after *April 29, 2025*, which is the deadline for receiving mail-in ballots.

A. Vote Count

- 1. Setting up for the vote count
 - a. Members of the Election Monitor Committee and assigned helpers shall count the in-person ballots. The chair is responsible for the smooth processing and counting of the ballots.
 - b. The vote count shall be held in a room separate from post-election socializing.
 - c. Candidates (and/or their representatives) are permitted to be present in the counting room, but they may not verbally question the counting or any other election procedures. If they have any objections to the procedures, they must submit a written challenge. **If the election vote counting is held remotely, there will be no option to observe vote counting.**

2. Preparation and validation of ballots
 - a. All ballots will first be scanned to ensure none has more than 7 votes cast for Village Board slots and no more than 1 vote cast for Columbia Council Representative. If part of the ballot is invalid, only the invalid section will not be used in the count.
 - b. The Election Monitor Chair will then determine the validity of the ballots that were cast by voters who were not on the voter list. (Ballots were placed in sealed envelopes.)
3. Counting the ballots
 - a. The ballots are divided into piles of up to 40 ballots, and each pile of ballots is assigned to two counters.
 - b. Each counter records ballots on a counting grid. The grid shall be numbered vertically from 1 to 40 and have candidates' names across the top. Each ballot shall be assigned a separate line.
 - c. Each counter counts one pile of 40 ballots on a separate grid. The two grids are totaled and compared for accuracy. If a discrepancy exists, the pile of 40 ballots shall be recounted until the discrepancy is resolved.
4. Official election results - Official election results shall be released by the Election Monitor Committee Chair(s) after all mail-in ballots received by the deadline are counted.
5. Challenge procedure
 - a. Challenges must be in writing or sent by email and submitted to the Election Monitor Committee chair within 5 calendar days after the release of the election results. After receiving a challenge, the committee shall meet within 5 days for discussion on the challenge and, if necessary, to make any recommendations to the Village Board.
 - b. The committee is not required to consider any challenges, unless they could affect the results of the election, until after the election is certified. The committee should then evaluate the election procedures and the complaint and make recommendations in the final report of the election.
6. Certification of results
 - a. The Village Board shall certify, or invalidate, the election after reviewing the election report submitted by the Election Monitor Committee.
 - b. The committee must submit its report **by Tuesday, May 13, 2025.**